removal of Quantitative Restrictions does not automatically remove all the protection available to the domestic producers.

India can regulate imports through adjustments in customs Tariff within the bound rates. The rates of Customs duty on agriculfural produce are generally higher than the peak rate of customs duty of 15%, and range from 30% to 105%. The Central Board of Excise and Customs also fixes minimum trariff rates for various edible oils such as crude palm oil, RBD palm oil, crude palmolein, crude soyabean oil, etc. This is to ensure that there is no under valuation of prices in the landed cost of imported edible oils which may adversely affect the production of oilseeds in the country. In addition, the import duty on crude and refined palm oil has recently been raised upwards to 80% and 90%, to provide necessary protection to domestic growers of oil seeds. In cases of prices falling below the specified levels, the Government undertakes procurement operations, to ensure that farmers interest are protected. In case of cotton the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics' data of import from April 04 to Feb 05 shows that there has been a decline in import, so there is no question of a fall in prices due to excessive import.

The non-tariff regulations through which imports are regulated include compliance with the previsions of the Food Adulteration Act, 1954, Meat Food Product Order, Packaging requirements, Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (PTS) measures etc. The import of 300 sensitive items including major food items is being monitored on a regular basis by the Government for checking any surge in imports.

Decline in export of molasses and fruits/vegetables

4348. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether export of molasses and fruits/vegetables seeds has declined in the last two years;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken to increase the exports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) The import of seeds into India was restricted by changes in the Plant Quarantine guidelines. As a result, import of stock seeds (parent seeds) used for multiplication was restricted. Consequently the production of exportable seeds decreased.

(c)'Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) operates various schemes under which financial assistance is provided to the exporters for market development, infrastructure development, qualtiy development, research and development and transportation.

Indian Goods to Afghanistan through Pakistan

4349. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY:
SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian goods are not being permitted to Afghanistan through Pakistan;

(b) if so, whether Government has held any talks with Pakistan in this regard;

(c) the details of such talks;

(d) the outcome thereof; and

(e) the likely income to be generated?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) to (e) The issue of transit of Indian goods from Pakistan to Afghanistan is high on the agenda of the Government and has been taken up with Pakistan. The issue was raised during the visit of Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf to India from April 16-18,2005 and the Prime Minister of India underlined the need to multiply beneficial linkages of trade and transit.